



Early Childhood Education and Care

Workforce Action Plan

2016–2019



A message from the Minister



The skills, qualifications, dedication and experience of our workforce make early childhood education and care services great.

The professionalism that early childhood education and care staff demonstrate each and every day ensures quality outcomes for children.

The *Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan 2016–2019* will develop the capacity of Queensland's early childhood education and care workforce and forms part of the Palaszczuk Government's Working Queensland jobs plan to support and create more jobs for Queenslanders.

Extensive sector consultations informed this new plan, which builds on the success of the Workforce Action Plan 2011–2014.

And while much progress has already been made in workforce upskilling more needs to be done:

- Qualification requirements and educator-to-child ratios continue to present challenges for services, especially in rural and remote locations;

- More work is needed to promote the value and professionalism of the early childhood education and care workforce; and
- Educators need support to work effectively with the most vulnerable children and families.

This plan responds directly to these priority issues.

I acknowledge the important role the sector has played in shaping these priorities – and recognise that only through this ongoing partnership will we achieve our aims.

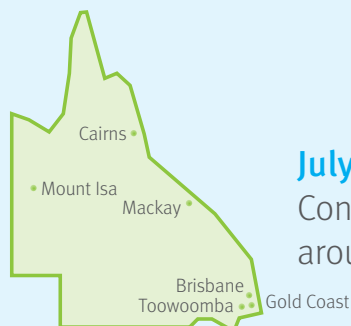
Together, we can build a workforce that has the training, skills, confidence and resilience needed to provide the very best services for all children and families.

The Hon Kate Jones MP
Minister for Education

Workforce Action Plan timeline



July 2011
Workforce Action Plan 2011–2014 launched



July–August 2014
Consultation forums held around the state



July 2014
Workforce Action Plan Consultation Paper released



Context

The early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector is growing in Queensland. In 2014, 31,099 people were working in ECEC services across the state, an increase of 16 per cent in only three years. This growth is set to continue, and new staff-to-child ratio requirements under the National Law from 2016 are expected to fuel ongoing demand for qualified educators.

The review of the ECEC Workforce Action Plan (WAP) 2011–2014 painted a picture of a sector that has made enormous progress in workforce upskilling and development, supported by WAP strategies such as the Early Childhood Teacher Bridging Program and Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships. The consultation report documented many examples of good practice from right across the sector. As of 31 March 2015, only 2 per cent of Queensland services had a waiver in place because they were unable to meet the qualification requirements under the *National Law*.

The introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF) has increased the qualification requirements for staff working in ECEC, and services report that the demands, responsibilities and complexity of working in ECEC are increasing.

Challenges remain, especially for services and educators in rural and remote communities. The review made it clear that many services continue to experience real difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified staff, particularly early childhood teachers. From 2016, new entrants to early childhood teaching qualifications in Queensland will have to meet new pre-requisite requirements.

Educators in remote communities, including many remote Indigenous educators, face particular barriers to participating in training and gaining the qualifications they need.

The review consultations also made it clear that the issues affecting the ECEC workforce are broader than just qualifications. The importance of “being valued” was a consistent theme. Throughout the consultations educators and service providers voiced the need to raise the professional standing of the sector. Without greater understanding of ECEC as a profession, the sector felt that challenges recruiting and retaining high quality staff would remain.

Ongoing access to high quality professional development is also needed for educators to develop and maintain the skills they need to respond to the complex needs of children and families and the changing responsibilities of their roles. Building workforce capability in leadership and working with children with complex needs were identified in the review as two key priorities for skills development across the sector.

The ECEC Workforce Action Plan 2016–2019 explicitly responds to these issues, while retaining the flexibility to respond to emerging issues over the life of the plan.



December 2014
Project evaluation
summaries published



October 2015
Workforce Action Plan
2016–2019 launched

November 2014
Workforce Action Plan
Consultation Report distributed



May 2015
Research project
summaries released

Vision

During the consultations, stakeholders were asked where they would like to see the ECEC workforce by the end of this new 2016–2019 Workforce Action Plan. They described a workforce that would be “professional, qualified and valued”.

The WAP 2016–2019 adopts this vision and sets out how we will support its achievement. It recognises that this vision will only be attained through all stakeholders – employers, unions, educators, training providers, schools, higher education institutions, support agencies and government – working together.

The work of caring for and educating young children is complex and highly skilled.

Achieving better outcomes for children requires a workforce that can work across professional boundaries and support continuity of learning. For this reason, this plan defines the ECEC workforce as staff in both ECEC services and in the early years of school – Prep to year 3.

Providing quality services to vulnerable families and children requires a workforce that is skilled and confident in working with children with additional needs, including children with disability and complex emotional and social behaviours. Achieving increased participation in ECEC by Indigenous families requires the support of services staffed by qualified and experienced Indigenous educators.

The WAP provides a foundation for joint action over the coming three years to support the continuing development of such a workforce.

The plan sets out actions in each of the three priority areas identified through the review:

- Being valued
- Qualifications
- Skills

Across all action areas, the focus will be on working in partnership with all stakeholders to deliver strategies that have a solid evidence base, build capacity, and are responsive to local conditions and needs.



Action areas

1. Being valued

The value of working in the ECEC sector needs to be better understood and promoted if the profession is to be seen as a career of choice. Recruitment and retention of high quality educators will improve if ECEC is seen as a rewarding, challenging and important career with clear pathways for progression and recognition.

We will:

- launch Queensland's first ECEC careers campaign – *Inspire the future. Choose a career in early childhood*. This exciting new campaign will use modern multimedia approaches to reach new entrants, career changers and existing ECEC staff, highlighting the ways early childhood careers offer opportunities to make a difference during the most critical time in a child's development.
- consult with the ECEC sector and other key stakeholders regarding options for professional registration for early childhood teachers.

2. Qualifications

As the sector continues to expand, support for priority qualifications will help to maintain a supply of suitably qualified educators, while targeted strategies will provide additional support for educators, including Indigenous educators, studying for their qualifications in rural and remote services. Effective pathways to early childhood teaching qualifications will also be a key priority.

We will:

- subsidise the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care through the Certificate 3 Guarantee Program.*
- subsidise the Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care through the Higher Level Skills Program.*
- subsidise the Diploma of School Age Education and Care through the Higher Level Skills Program.*
- explore support for educators to meet the new pre-requisite requirements for entry into early childhood teaching degrees from 2016.
- broaden access to a diploma subsidy to enable more registered primary teachers gain an approved early childhood teaching qualification through the successful Early Childhood Teacher Bridging Program.
- provide additional study support for rural and remote educators through a new Growing Our Own Program across the state to meet legislative qualification requirements.
- offer new Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships to support Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualified educators in rural and remote services to gain an approved early childhood teaching qualification.
- support educators in remote Indigenous communities to gain approved early childhood qualifications through the Indigenous Remote Support Coordination Project.

3. Skills

Targeted skills development, professional development and networking will support educators to respond to the demands of their role. Skills development will enhance the focus on children's learning and development, as well as continuity and connection of services across early childhood settings and the early years of school. High quality support and professional development opportunities will help to retain valued staff and reduce turnover.

We will:

- launch the innovative *Early Years Connect* service, providing a 'one-stop shop' of online resources for educators working with children with additional needs, including children with disability and complex emotional and social behaviours. This interactive online resource will be complemented with a statewide program of face-to-face professional development in the inclusion of children with additional needs and working collaboratively across disciplines.
- subsidise three new targeted and industry-endorsed skill sets under the Higher Levels Skills Program:
 - » Team leader skills set
 - » Supporting children and families with complex needs skills set
 - » Building inclusive practices skills set.
- pilot leadership skills development projects across the state, supporting local networks to develop place-based models for pedagogical leadership and communities of practice across ECEC services and the early years of school.
- continue to support Indigenous professional capacity leadership development in ECEC through professional development programs.
- support teachers in the early years of schooling to refocus on age-appropriate pedagogies through a classroom-based action research project in a cross-section of metropolitan and rural and remote schools, supplemented by the development of online resources.
- work with sector peak bodies to develop and implement professional development programs, training materials and curriculum resources to improve educational program and practice.

*Eligibility criteria may apply. Please visit www.skillsgateway.training.qld.gov.au for additional information.

Workforce Action Plan summary

	Being valued	Qualifications	Skills
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers campaign – <i>Inspire the future. Choose a career in early childhood.</i> Early childhood teacher registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care Diploma of School Age Education and Care Early Childhood Teacher Bridging Program Growing Our Own Program Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships (rural and remote) Indigenous Remote Support Coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Years Connect</i>: Knowledge, Skills, Support New skills sets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Team leader skills set » Supporting children and families with complex needs skills set » Building inclusive practices skills set Leadership skills development pilot programs Professional development for Indigenous educators Age appropriate pedagogies action research project Educational program and practice development project
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early childhood education and care is valued as a profession and attracts new entrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services are able to attract and retain the qualified staff they need to respond to demand and meet legislative requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver a quality early childhood program that meets the needs of all children in their care
Key performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of early childhood educators Increase in enrolments in early childhood education and care qualifications Reduction in vacancy rates in the early childhood education and care sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number and proportion of educators who hold a relevant qualification Increase in the number of early childhood teachers working in early childhood education and care services Reduction in vacancy rates in the early childhood education and care sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased satisfaction by early childhood education and care educators that they have the skills and knowledge to deliver a quality early childhood program Increased satisfaction by services that skills development activities produce service level change

2014 baseline data

Total number of educators	31,099
Total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators	940
Total number of early childhood teachers	3,371
Total number and proportion of educators holding a relevant qualification	21,144 (80%) (centre-based) 3,035 (80%) (family day care)
Vacancy rate for educators	14% (metro) 20% (regional)
Vacancy rate for early childhood teachers	27% (metro) 44% (regional)

Source: Department of Education and Training (2014), Early Childhood Education and Care Services Census, Brisbane: Queensland Government. Department of Employment (2014), Canberra: Australian Government.

Putting the plan into action

The issues impacting on the ECEC workforce are continually changing, so it is critical that our workforce planning adapts and responds over time.

Consultation

Genuine consultation and engagement with all stakeholders will ensure the strategies outlined in the plan will deliver the sector's vision of a workforce that is "professional, qualified and valued".

New ECEC Partnership Officers across the state will ensure that we connect with the knowledge and experience of the early childhood networks on the ground.

We will use our website, workforce surveys and regional forums to ensure voices are heard at all levels throughout all stages of the plan.

Accountability

We will work with stakeholders across the state to:

- produce annual WAP reports
- track progress under the plan
- identify priorities for implementation.

This process will be informed by a continual cycle of planning, assessment, evaluation and consultation.

New initiatives will continue to be rolled out over the life of the plan.

Evidence base

We will undertake analysis of population level workforce data collected through the annual Queensland ECEC census to inform our review process.

As well, the Department of Education and Training is supporting a major new study, identifying effective strategies to grow and sustain a professional early years workforce, conducted by Queensland University of Technology in partnership with Charles Sturt University, C&K and Goodstart.

This study aims to identify factors associated with retention and active engagement of educators and other ECEC staff. The emerging findings of this research will inform the development and review of the WAP over the next three years.

Be informed

To find out more about these initiatives, how you can be involved, and to keep up to date with progress, visit earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/WAP.



